

Q

9753375

Eastern Sisters: Images of Domesticity in Romantic Orientalist Fiction by Women, 1830-1850

By:

Sharifah Aishah Osman

(Paper presented at the *Transnational Identities/Reimagining Communities Conference* held on 12-15 March 2008 at University of Bologna, Italy)

Perpustakaan Universiti Malaya



A513365207

(Trans)national Identities/Reimagining Communities Conference
March 12-15, 2008 University of Bologna, Italy

**Eastern Sisters: Images of Domesticity in Romantic Orientalist
Fiction by Women, 1830-1850**

Sharifah Aishah Osman
University of Malaya

Much of the critical scholarship in the field of Romantic literary studies dealing with the drawing room annual as a genre has emphasized its role as a symbol of wealth and social status in nineteenth-century popular culture. The annuals consisted of poems and stories provided by well-connected contributors that were frequently accompanied by illustrated plates or fine steel engravings of various beautiful young women, or portraits of stately homes or exotic landscapes visited only by the affluent. For Sonia Hofkosh, the annuals were domestic objects that were culturally fetishized and “reproduce[d] a system of value styled on the appearance of aristocracy for an emulous, upwardly mobile reading public” (“Disfiguring Economies” 206), while Anne Renier and Anne Mellor both reinforce the idea that these books were purchased primarily for public display in the homes of fashionable ladies of “taste and refinement,” or those who wanted to be perceived as such (Renier, *Friendship’s Offering* 20; Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* 111). As Robert Southey commented in 1828, “The Annuals are now the only books bought for presents to young ladies.”¹

Yet as Glennis Stephenson observes, annuals such as *Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrap Book*, *The Keepsake* and *Heath’s Book of Beauty* were more than visually attractive volumes marketed for an undiscerning, female audience. In fact, they played a crucial role in the construction and consolidation of a middle-class female domestic ideal, one that was achieved through the linking of the female images that appeared within them

with English national character. These idealized depictions of womanhood--embodied in the visual and poetical illustrations of beautiful young women, both English and foreign--were highly influential in the perpetuation of such middle-class domestic virtues as monogamy, Christianity, and the imperial civilizing mission, and were thus used to "[help] legitimize both England's sense of moral superiority and the imperial ambitions this superiority underwrote" (144). In a similar vein, Mellor in *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (2000), calls attention to how British women authors created and sustained a sense of cross-cultural sorority through the celebration of the domestic sphere, especially in their role as benevolent Christians who empathized with the colonized, subjugated Eastern woman (144-146).

My analysis of the role of the annuals in the propagation and consolidation of British national identity in the 1830s and 40s builds upon the feminist ideas that underlie the work of Stephenson and Mellor on the literary contributions of nineteenth-century women authors in the transmission of nationalist ideology. In a previous study on Letitia E. Landon in her role as editor and contributor to the various annuals of the period, for instance, I argued that her Orientalist fiction in the annuals provide important insights into how women authors displayed a sympathetic view of Eastern women, deploying them as exoticized figures of sentimental womanhood not only to promote such middle-class "feminine" virtues as patience, fortitude, and fidelity, but also to subvert the validity of such ideals in order to challenge prevailing patriarchal attitudes toward women at home. In doing so, I demonstrate how it is inaccurate to assume that xenophobia is a conceptual given in Romantic literary discourse, as Rajani Sudan claims (*Fair Exotics* 22) since female authors like Landon frequently rejected an overly simplistic view of

Oriental women as passive and morally depraved, preferring to highlight their roles as moral authorities within the family instead. More importantly, my research on Landon's literary output in the annuals revealed the relatively untapped potential of this genre as a source for understanding how nineteenth-century British female authors perceived the Oriental woman with characteristic ambivalence—exemplary in her display of feminine virtues and domesticated as the Western woman's "recognizable image in the mirror," as Billie Melman notes (*Women's Orient*s 316), yet paradoxically retaining vestiges of her liminal status as a figure of "irredeemable difference and exoticism,"² unable to escape the ambiguity of her colonialist female identity.

Thus, although the female-authored Orientalist fiction that appeared in the annuals of the 1830s and 40s continued to reflect elements of negative cultural stereotyping--Landon herself, for example, occasionally deployed the abject figure of the female harem slave³--the contributors' persistent use of images of domesticity as well as their emphasis on the primacy of the "domestic affections" in their depictions of the Orient and its peoples also underscores the idea of sorority through an emphasis on feminine sameness over difference. After Landon's demise in 1838, her successor at *Fisher's* Sarah Stickney Ellis continued her legacy in the 1840s by adopting the literary style that she popularized in the previous decade, choosing poems and illustrations that focused on the interior of Eastern homes, and that displayed a concern with the daily lives and common experiences of Eastern peoples--one made possible through the emphasis on women. Such a view not only enables authors like Landon and Ellis to promote a feminine bond of sympathy between English women and their "eastern sisters," but more importantly, reflects the notion of the British Empire as maternal and nurturing toward

her colonies, a form of propaganda which proved eminently useful in the consolidation of the colonial civilizing mission.

Drawing upon selected poems published between 1836 to 1845 in the popular drawing room annual *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book*, specifically "The Hindoo Mother", "Gardens of the Seraglio Palace" and "Apartment in a Mandarin's House, China," this paper will attempt to reveal how the images of feminine domesticity found in such Orientalist poems helped women authors such as Letitia Landon and Sarah Ellis to foster cross-cultural understanding among their readers through the foregrounding of similarities in the domestic life of East and West, one based on the primacy of the domestic affections. More significantly, the female authors' ambivalent portrayal of the Eastern woman in these poems demonstrate how the annuals enabled them to embrace their roles as Christians through their sympathy for their "oppressed Eastern sisters," while simultaneously cultivating a sense of national pride in the moral superiority of England and its women--a mitigating outlook that served to reinforce the role of England as a colonial power.

To begin my discussion, I wish to turn your attention, first, to an image which for many British middle-class audiences of the time represented the feminized beauty of colonial India, as illustrated by William Daniell in his frontispiece to John Hobart Caunter's *Oriental Annual* (1834), a publication "devoted to legends and descriptions of Eastern scenes" (Renier 11). Titled "A Hindoo Female," the engraving depicts a beautiful young Indian woman carrying a water pot in one hand as she balances three others on her head, with her back to the audience as she walks towards a river. The tropical setting is framed by banana and coconut palms, an idyllic scene complemented by the generic

pagan architecture in the background. As Hermione de Almeida observes, the woman represents, with her “swelling hips, narrow waist [and] curved bosom...an abstracted and female India--with her appeal and sexuality, and her energy and fruitfulness, tamed, made useful and put to work bearing water and nourishment to the farthest reaches of the British empire.” She further states that in line with the role of the *Oriental Annual* as a decorative drawing room book that “promoted the pleasing prospects of empire,” the woman symbolizes what India had come to represent in the English imagination in the 1830s—the “meek access and availability” of a feminized nation, awaiting agreeably to the “paternalism and husbandry” of British imperial administration (*Indian Renaissance* 257).

Female authors of Orientalist fiction in the annuals were less overt in their portrayal of the colonial woman as a sexualized object of feminine beauty, ripe for imperial conquest and benevolent salvation, choosing instead to embrace a communal spirit of sisterhood between women of the East and West through the idealization of the domestic affections and the valorization of their mutual roles as wives, mothers and daughters. Nevertheless, despite the sentimentalized depictions of these “eastern sisters,” the underlying message of the validity of the colonial civilizing mission remains clear. Thus, although authors like Landon and Ellis deployed “a rhetoric of sympathy grounded in the celebration and preservation of the domestic sphere,”⁴ their poems maintained an emphasis on the Eastern woman as a figure of ambiguity, invoking sympathy and admiration but also fear and distrust, unknown yet dangerously intriguing. By strategically appropriating the liminal qualities of the domesticated Oriental heroine--a figure of colonial otherness who was at once “foreign” yet “familiar”--these authors were

able to establish, in their readers' minds, a concept of feminist solidarity between English women and their "less fortunate" Eastern sisters while staying well within the bounds of feminine propriety.

Landon's "The Hindoo Mother" from the 1836 edition of *Fisher's Drawing Room Keepsake* provides a particularly compelling example of her implicit endorsement of British colonialist ambitions in India, one that is achieved not only by evoking a sense of compassion in her female readers but also by validating their moral superiority as "civilized" English citizens. The poem, in its melodramatic representation of maternal grief, depicts an Indian woman pouring forth her lamentations over the loss of her child as she prepares to release the body of her dead infant into the Ganges River:

She leaves it to the sacred stream,
 She leaves it to the tide,
 Her little child – her darling one,
 And she has none beside.
 [...]
 The light has vanished from her day,
 The hope has gone from her heart;
 The young, the bright, and the beloved,
 Oh! how could he depart? (5)⁵

The accompanying illustration (which also serves as the frontispiece to the annual) shows a young Hindu mother by a riverbank, grieving over the body of her dead son. Additionally, in a detailed note after the poem, Landon provides an intriguing description of the ritual in question:

Of the custom represented in the engraving, Mrs. Belnos gives the following interesting description: "Hindoos of high caste burn their dead; but if unable to do so from poverty, are forced to throw them into the Ganges, after having performed the ceremony of burning the mouth with a wisp of straw. The expenses attending the burning of the dead are too great for any but the rich. When the infant of a poor Hindoo dies, the wretched mother takes it up in her arms, and carries it to the river, on the bank of which she lays it for some time on a piece of mat [...] she stands weeping over the body a little while, then retires a few paces

back, where she sits down watching for the return of the tide to wash away the body [...] at intervals she breaks forth in loud lamentations..."Oh my child! Who has taken thee, my child! (5)

In short, Landon's poem and her footnote both demonstrate her deliberate deployment of sentimentalized pathos in her depiction of the bereaved Hindu mother in order to encourage her female audience not only to share in her suffering, but also to embrace their roles as benevolent Christians who empathize with her as a subjugated Eastern woman forced to conform to such a "barbaric" religious and cultural practice. To emphasize further the heathen nature of this funeral rite, the poem includes in its first stanza a small yet evocative pictorial representation of a "civilized" Christian burial as a study in contrasts--the presence of a large cross and a cortege consisting of men and women in Western dress clearly evident despite the heavily stylized letter "S" in the foreground, as seen in the enlarged detail shown here.

Due to the popularity and commercial success of Landon's poems during her editorship of *Fisher's*, her successor Sarah Stickney Ellis found no reason to veer from a tried and tested literary formula. Conforming to the principle that "people like pretty pictures"⁶—especially of beautiful women in idyllic, exotic settings (as Landon declared to William Jerdan, her publisher), Ellis touts the 1844 edition of the annual as a most fitting Christmas gift to be shared among women, especially given its symbolic role in the rekindling of "kind remembrances of friends and affections."⁷ Like Landon's depiction of the crude religious rituals of the Hindus in comparison to the civility of the English as followers of the Christian faith, Ellis's "Gardens of the Seraglio Palace" highlights the oppressiveness of life in a Turkish harem in order to extol the virtues of monogamy practised by the English woman.

Again, the epigraph to the poem makes for interesting reading and deserves particular attention, especially since it is addressed to “Christian wives.” Ellis here quotes “the Rev. Robert Walsh, LL.D. Chaplain to the British Embassy at the Ottoman Porte” in his description of Constantinople:

An error has long and universally prevailed in the West of Europe, as to the degree of liberty Turkish ladies enjoy; and their supposed subjection to their husbands has excited the pity of Christian wives; but, if freedom alone constitute happiness, then not only are the wives and the odalisques, but the female slaves in Turkey, the happiest of the human race. They visit, and are visited, without exciting jealousy, or being subjected to resentment: the most gorgeous apartments, the most beautiful pleasure-grounds of every palace, are devoted solely to their use; and the gardens of the Seraglio Palace at Constantinople, with their orange-groves, rose-beds, geraniums and marble fountains, afford an admirable illustration of some scene of enchantment in an Arabian tale.⁸ (61)

In response to the Rev. Walsh’s stereotypically masculine fantasy of the placidly carefree life of luxury led by Turkish women in the seraglio, Ellis’s poem asserts the moral superiority of “the humble [English] matron’s lot”, whose purposeful life as a virtuous wife and mother is much preferred to the idle, empty pleasures of the Turkish Muslim woman immured within a polygamous harem. She states:

There may be sunshine streaming
 Within that garden fair;
 There may be beauty beaming,
 Soft eyes, and shining hair;
 [...]
 But, ah! there may be tears,
 And sighs of deepest sadness,
 Where all so bright appears.

For woman’s love was never
 A thing to buy and sell;
 No, happier far, for ever
 In solitude to dwell,
 Than share with all – with any,
 The fond approving smile-

But one amongst the many,
To sport with for a while.

Oh! nobler far, and better,
The humble matron's lot;
Though thousand cares beset her
Within her lowly cot;
Though from her cheek the roses
Of youth may all be gone,
If on her truth reposes
A heart that loves but one. (61)

Ellis's validation of and pride in the virtues of English monogamy clearly deflates the idealized depiction of Eastern femininity perpetuated by deluded male commentators on harem life such as the Rev. Walsh and his ilk, and is significant in its aim to promote fidelity as a desirable English female, middle-class trait. In fact, she evokes the rhetoric of sympathy by declaring that the subjection of Turkish women to their husbands, which Walsh claims has been grossly exaggerated, is far from mere speculation since the lives of these women are indeed filled with superficiality, inconstancy, and "deepest sadness," despite being able to indulge in various forms of material pleasure--"gorgeous apartments" and "beautiful pleasure grounds"--straight out of an "enchanted" Arabian tale. As Mohja Kahf notes, the use of the harem woman as a negative ideal here clearly "make[s] the glorified domesticity of the ideal Western woman look benign by contrast" (158). In short, Ellis implies that although the white British wife cannot quite claim to enjoy an egalitarian marriage, held back as she is by a common sexual slavery to man⁹, she is able to take a small measure of comfort in assuming a more superior moral position to her eastern sisters in the harem, given that she at least has sole possession of her husband's love and devotion in a monogamous Christian marriage, "though thousand cares beset her."

Ellis's poem "Apartment in a Mandarin's House," which appears in the 1845 edition of *Fisher's*, reflects a similar ambiguity in the way it glorifies the peace and contentment enjoyed by the Chinese woman yet also demonstrates a subtle condescension towards her "childlike" state in comparison to European women. The setting of the poem, as displayed in the illustration, is the interior of a Mandarin's home, where a beautiful Chinese woman dressed in Oriental finery is shown resting comfortably on a chair, flanked by a loving husband. She is surrounded by servants attending to her every need—a nanny minds her child, a male servant shows her a bolt of embroidered fabric, while a female attendant serves the family tea. In a prefatory note, the poet describes the effects of this scene of domestic splendor in the most glowing of terms, again significantly comparing it to the interior of the "civilized" English home:

I know not how this beautiful picture of the interior of a Mandarin's house may strike others, but to me it presents a scene of graceful luxury, and easy contentment, which I feel, and that few English drawing-rooms can surpass. For picturesque effect, nothing can exceed the oval doorway; nor for ornament, the light and elegant lantern [...] If the scene before us altogether affords a fair specimen of the domestic life of the Chinese, it might become a serious question, how much we had really gained by our boasted civilization.¹⁰ (57)

Ellis's acknowledgement of the distinctive beauty of Chinese architecture and interior design in the note is further developed in the respectful tone she uses to address the Chinese woman in the opening stanza of the poem, describing her as a "[s]weet comely mother of the East" who is nothing less than "matronly"—a domesticated image of Eastern femininity that as Melman asserts, serves as the Western woman's "recognizable image in the mirror" (*Women's Orient*s 316). Further, the poet not only calls into question the Western inclination to stereotype the Chinese woman as a member of a heathen race, but also defends her common humanity in an apparent spirit of

sisterhood. Despite her racial difference, the poet implies that she is just as entitled as the European woman to be treated with dignity and respect:

What, though the European dame
 May laugh to hear thy heathen name,
 Exclude thee from her polished rule
 Because thou ne'er wert sent to school,
 And deem herself as far above
 Thy humble claims to Christian love,
 As if thy wondrous nation were
 A hive of bees to toil for her.
 Yet something in that look of thine,
 Sweet comely matron, seems to shine
 With more than ever beauty's grace
 Alone could give to form or face. (57)

Ellis's appeal for an egalitarian view of the Chinese woman in the second stanza cited above is further reinforced through a comparison of her privileged state as a "gentle dame" decked in pearls and costly gems, with that of English women, who are oppressed by "toil" and "strife":

Ah! peaceful dame, thou knowest not
 What cares beset our boasted lot;
 What toil for splendour, and for gold;
 What strife to keep the place we hold;
 [...]
 What bitter thoughts of grief and pain
 For fortune sought, and sought in vain.

Yet, the poet's admiration for the Chinese woman's life of peace and contentment is undermined by her ambivalence towards the latter's subjugation to patriarchal authority, one that reflects Ellis's own fears and anxieties regarding the treatment of women closer to home, projected onto the body and circumstances of the female native subject--in this case, the Chinese wife and mother--as colonial "other." By referring to this "eastern sister" as a "meek and quiet spirit", Ellis suggests that "decked in...costly robes of state/ And envying neither rich nor great", the woman is lulled into contentment

by her “simple destiny,” and “sit[s] and smile[s] [her] life away...happy in [her] childlike glee.” The much-admired pearl that adorns her fair brow now only marks her “slavish obedience”¹¹ to man. In short, the Chinese woman, though not sequestered like the Turkish harem slave, is just as oppressed and deserving of pity, given her attempt to compensate for the monotony of her “childlike” state by surrounding herself with beauty, wealth and material possessions, including indulging in the luxury of delegating the role of motherhood and childrearing to a servant. Thus, the poem reflects Ellis’s propagation and consolidation of English bourgeois domestic ideology, enabling her to validate the moral authority of her middle-class female readers through the negation and censure of the aristocratic values that the Chinese woman represents, enfeebled as she is by her indulgent and ornamental existence. The poet also implies that English middle-class women who aspire to the aristocratic life of the idle rich, “toil[ing] for splendour,” “gold” and “fortune” would do well to take heed of the underlying moral message of the poem so as to avoid a similar depravity, even as they partake in the genteel ritual of “sip[ping]... odorous tea” from China (58).

Much of the ambiguity that appears in Ellis’s depiction of the Chinese woman in this poem corresponds with the conflicted attitude of the English towards China as a rival empire in the early decades of the nineteenth century. As David Jones and Barry Milligan note, the growing sense of rivalry and mutual threat between the two nations contributed to the “enlightened European disdain” for numerous Chinese customs and manners, a view both scholars attribute to the controversial incident involving the Macartney embassy of 1795, which highlighted “a characteristic British reticence” at being commanded to recognize another empire as superior, and resulted in severe strains in the

diplomatic relations between England and China. Additionally, Jones states that the ambiguity towards China was exacerbated by the English denunciation of the “affected superiority” of the Chinese mandarin in their reluctance to welcome the opportunity to trade with Britain, fuelling a political rivalry that culminated in the Anglo-Chinese opium wars of 1839-42 and 1856-60 (38).

Thus, while the comptroller of the Macartney embassy, John Barrow, in his *Travels in China* (1805) regarded the Chinese as “a ‘semi-barbarian race’ prone to despotism and encumbered by ‘stupid formalities’,” he also found much that impressed him about the country and its civilization, including “the religious opinions and morals” of Confucius, the establishment of the Chinese press, which he claims is “as free as in England,” and Chinese technical skills in organization and engineering (Barrow, cited in Jones 41-42). Likewise, later observers such as Hugh Murray in *An Historical and Descriptive Account of China* (1843) would declare that though the Chinese are “remarkable” and “industrious,” they were still a “less admirable people” compared to the Europeans (Murray, cited in Jones 48-49).

It comes as no real surprise then that Ellis’s poem reflects a similarly ambivalent view of China and the Chinese in its attempt to cater to popular tastes for such literary chinoiserie among the middle-class English reading public. The fact that the poem purports to express the poet’s admiration for the refined splendour of the Mandarin home but then proceeds to highlight the pitifully “meek and quiet spirit” of the Chinese woman, a figure rendered doubly weak by her delight in material pleasures as well as her “childlike” submission to patriarchal authority, only serves to validate the English

middle-class perception of the “affected superiority” of the Mandarins as members of a privileged class.

Thus it appears that the ambivalence that marked Landon’s treatment of the Indian woman in the 1836 poem “The Hindoo Mother” continues in the later editions of *Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrap Book* as well. Like Landon, Sarah Ellis composed such Orientalist poems as “Gardens of the Seraglio Palace” and “Apartment in a Mandarin’s House, China” in order to cater to the “ravenous appetite” of the English reading public for “[literary] representations of...exotic characters in Oriental settings thick with an atmosphere of magic and violence” (Milligan 18). More significantly, however, such poems enabled these two authors to promote feminine virtues linked to bourgeois domestic ideology by providing their middle-class female readers with the opportunity to embrace their roles as benevolent Christians through their sympathy for the subjugated Eastern woman.

To evoke Mellor’s argument in *Mothers of the Nation*, under the governance of feminine virtue, such a strategy enabled Landon and Ellis to create and sustain a sense of cross-cultural sorority through the display of sympathy for the suffering of these “unfortunate” eastern sisters--be it grief over the loss of a beloved child, or the emptiness of a life of material pleasure in contrast to one of emotional fulfillment--while simultaneously cultivating a sense of national pride in the moral superiority of England and its women. As Ellis asserts in *The Women of England*, “How intimate is the connexion which exists between the women of England, and the moral character maintained by this country in the scale of nations” (Ellis, cited in Colley 276).

In short, Landon and Ellis's Orientalist poems in *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book* enables them to "feminize" the concept of colonization by linking it with notions of sympathy, domesticity and nurturance. Furthermore, like the "feminization" of the keepsake annuals as a literary genre, these poems also demonstrate how the fetishized body of the domesticated Eastern woman--whether Hindu, Turkish Muslim, or Chinese--is reduced to that of a commodity, awaiting conquest and possession, a liminal figure of "irredeemable difference and exoticism" who has been "pared down and made jejune for easy digestion"¹² by English middle-class readers. Ultimately, while the desire of these two authors to emphasize the implicit bond between English women and their "eastern sisters" in these poems is admirable, such texts reveal how the attempt to define English national identity and moral character in nineteenth-century Orientalist fiction is also effectively and inextricably linked to the propagation and consolidation of the colonial civilizing mission.

¹² See Miller's discussion of women writers who developed a "figural representation of slavery as evil" to draw parallels between "the female African slave subjected to the sexual abuse of her white master and the white British who are united to the same slave" Miller, "Am I Not a Woman, and a Sister?" 317. While certainly a useful depiction of racial oppression by highlighting a common bond between Black English women and the Turkish harem slave.

¹³ Miller, "Argument in a Master's House, China" from *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book* for 1847 (London: Fisher, Son & Co., 1847) 47.

¹⁴ The phrase is from Mary Wollstonecraft who in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) argues that have the English law of "marriage" perhaps among the most cruel forms of economic and emotional exploitation on their husbands. See Wollstonecraft, 179.

¹⁵ See Miller, "Poetical Argumentation 157-168" where she argues a parallel between the Orientalist's portrayal of the domestication of the figure of the Muslim woman and positing her as an "irredeemable difference" by depicting her "outside from the master's world."

Notes

- ¹ Robert Southey, cited in Renier, *Friendship's Offering* 28.
- ² Kahf, *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman* 8.
- ³ See Landon's portrayal of the female harem slave in "Gulnare" from *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book* (1833) and "A Scene in the life of Nourmahal" from *Heath's Book of Beauty* (1837).
- ⁴ See Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation* 144-145. See also Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging a Nation* 273-281 where she discusses how British women of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries appropriated the private sphere by asserting their roles as moral authorities within the family in order to gain access to political causes such as the call for parliamentary reform and the anti-slavery movement.
- ⁵ Landon, "The Hindoo Mother" from *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-Book for 1836* (London: Fisher, Son & Co., 1836) 5.
- ⁶ See Landon's letter to Jerdan, c. 1834 in Sypher's edition of *Letters by Letitia Elizabeth Landon*, 100.
- ⁷ See Landon's epigraph which appears on the cover page of *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-Book for 1844*.
- ⁸ Sarah Ellis, "Gardens of the Seraglio Palace" from *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-Book for 1844* (London: Fisher, Son & Co., 1844) 61.
- ⁹ See Mellor's discussion of women writers who deployed of the figurative construction of slavery in order to draw parallels between "the female African slave subjected to the sexual abuse of her white master and the white British wife subjected to the same abuse." Mellor, "Am I not a Woman, and a Sister?" 317. Ellis exploits a similar dynamic of sexual oppression in highlighting a common bond between the English wife and the Turkish harem slave.
- ¹⁰ Ellis, "Apartment in a Mandarin's House, China" from *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-Book for 1845* (London: Fisher, Son & Co., 1845) 57.
- ¹¹ The phrase is from Mary Wollstonecraft, who in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) describes how the English law of "coverture" produces among British wives a similar form of economic and emotional dependence on their husbands. See Wollstonecraft, 150.
- ¹² See Kahf, *Western Representations* 157, 168 where she notes a parallel inclination among Romantic period authors to domesticate the figure of the Muslim woman and portray her as an "an object of possessive desire" by employing the "rescue from the harem" motif.

Works Cited

- Colley, Linda. *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.
- De Almeida, Hermione and George H. Gilpin. *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the prospect of India*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005.
- Ellis, Sarah Stickney, ed. *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-Book for 1844*. London: Fisher, Son & Co., 1844.
- . *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-Book for 1845*. London: Fisher, Son & Co., 1845.
- Hofkosh, Sonia. "Disfiguring Economies: Mary Shelley's Short Stories." *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Jones, David. *The Image of China in Western Social and Political Thought*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.
- Kahf, Mohja. *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman: From Termagant to Odalisque*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999.
- Landon, Letitia E., ed. *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-Book for 1836*. London: Fisher, Son & Co., 1836.
- Mellor, Anne. "Am I Not A Woman, and a Sister?: Slavery, Romanticism, and Gender." *Romanticism, race, and imperial culture, 1780-1834*. Ed. Alan Richardson and Sonia Hofkosh. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1996.
- . *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- Melman, Billie. *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918: Sexuality, Religion, and Work*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992..
- Milligan, Barry. *Pleasures and Pains: Opium and the Orient in Nineteenth-Century British Culture*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995.
- Renier, Anne. *Friendship's Offering: An Essay on the Annuals and Giftbooks of the 19th Century*. London: Private Libraries Association, 1964.
- Stephenson, Glennis. *Letitia Landon: The woman behind L.E.L.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.
- Sudan, Rajani. *Fair Exotics: Xenophobic Subjects in English Literature, 1720-1850*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

Sypher, F.J., ed. *Letters by Letitia Elizabeth Landon*. Ann Arbor, MI: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 2001.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Ed. Carol Poston. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988.